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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the effect of six weeks of sentence-combining activities on the syntactic maturity of first-year university students. The Syntactic Maturity Test (SMT) and a free writing exercise were used as pre/post instruments to determine words-per-T-unit and words-per-clause ratios. Significant results favoring the experimental group were found for both measures on the SMT, and for words-per-T-unit on the free writing exercise. In every case, experimental groups registered improvement to levels well beyond those reported in previous studies of skilled adults. The comparatively large gains experienced by these students were interpreted as supporting the further development and testing of such curriculum materials for students of this age. (Author/AA)

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SENTENCE-COMBINING AND SYNTACTIC MATURITY

IN

FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study assessed the effect on the syntactic maturity of first-year university students (1976, 1977) of six weeks of work with Strong's (1973) sentence-combining materials. For determining words-per-T-unit and words-per-clause ratios, the Syntactic Maturity Test by O'Donnell and Hunt (1970) and a free writing exercise were pre-post instruments, the first only being used in 1976 and both in 1977. With respect to the Syntactic Maturity Test, analyses of covariance showed consistently positive results from the 1976 and the 1977 treatments, with all F ratios significant at the .001 level. On the 1977 free writing, a similar analysis showed support for the words-per-T-unit measure only, with an F ratio significant at the .05 level. In every case, the experimental groups registered improvement to levels well beyond those reported by Hunt (1970) for skilled adults. The comparatively large increments experienced by these university students on these particular measures over such a short period of time augured well for the development and testing of new curricular materials designed to foster flexibility and maturity in young writers.

Sentence-Combining and Syntactic Maturity in First Year University

Two articles in English Journal, February 1976, signal the current interest in the subject of this study: "Close-Up: Sentence-Combining - Back to Basics and Beyond" by Strong (pp. 56; 60-64) and "The Sentence-Combining Myth" by Marzano (pp. 57-59). Strong's piece is an enthusiastic popularization of informal sentence-combining for increased control of the syntactic resources of our language, while Marzano's presents data that would seem to undermine the positions taken by Mellon (1969) and Hunt (1970) and issues a warning against expecting too much from the sentence-combining movement.

As a matter of fact, during the last decade the whole subject of syntactic development in school children and adults has concerned a good number of English teachers and researchers. Hunt (1965, 1970) investigated the free writing of school children in grades 4, 8, and 12, and the writing of "skilled" adults who published in The Atlantic and Harper's. To eliminate the very real problem of distinguishing between sentences and non-sentences in children's writing he introduced the "minimal terminable unit" or "T-unit" which he later defined as "one main clause plus any subordinate clause or non-clausal structure that is attached to or embedded on it" (1970, p. 4). For Hunt, this T-unit turned out to be the most significant index of syntactic maturity for school groups. Second best was clause length and third best clauses per T-unit. Meanwhile, O'Donnell and his associates at Florida State

University (1965-67) had developed a rewrite passage on an expository subject that elicited successively longer clauses and successively longer T-units from students in elementary and high school grades; and it was this test paragraph that Hunt (1970) used in his study of syntactic maturity in schoolchildren and adults and that this researcher used in this study of the effect of sentence-combining practice on the writing of first-year university students.

Five curricula designed to increase sentence-embedding were examined: Bateman and Zidonis' (1966) in the ninth and tenth grades, Mellon's (1969) in the seventh grade, Miller and Ney's (1968) in the fourth grade, O'Hare's (1973) in the seventh grade, and Combs' (1975-6) also in the seventh grade. All reported that groups using their experimental materials showed significantly more growth than comparable control groups, and all observed no negative effects. The first two coupled definite instruction in the use of transformational-generative grammar with extensive sentence-combining practice, while the other three relied almost exclusively on a modified signal system to provide patterns for carefully structured practice and found that their "grammar-free" experimental lessons resulted in syntactic maturity increments several times the normal. Also noted was Cooper's (1973) guide for writing sentence-combining problems. Finally, in his search for new materials, the writer came upon Strong's (1973) Sentence Combining - A Composing Book which provided exercises that, unlike others, did not utilize a system of transformational signals or guides and which

encouraged the students to experiment, to evaluate, to rewrite, and to compose on their own. Both in content and in form, this text seemed ideally suited for the freshman students he was teaching.

Two main factors prompted the present project: the current furor over the writing competencies of first-year university students, and the need to find a teaching strategy that might make for a relatively rapid increase in their syntactic capabilities. Some studies (Vitale, King, Shontz, and Huntley, 1971; Perron, 1974) had showed that short intensive exposure to sentence-combining practice accelerated growth in syntactic maturity; and, although Schmeling (1969) concluded that T-unit and clause length did not clearly differentiate between poor and good freshman papers, the ambitious review by Stotsky (1975) demonstrated quite convincingly that these could be useful measures with older groups and that sentence-combining practice did increase both the maturity and the quality of writing in elementary and high school students. It seemed reasonable, therefore, to hope that this same effect could carry over into first-year university at least. O'Hare's (1973) and Combs' (1975) encouraging research gave rise to the design and procedure chosen, while Strong's (1973) book provided the basic material for the control groups and Hunt's (1970) study a test instrument. Finally, two six-week freshman "Communications" modules, running concurrently, presented a good opportunity for an investigation beyond the high school level.

Hypothesis, Design and Procedure

The purpose of this study was to test whether the use of the sentence-combining practice material produced by Strong (1973) would increase the normal syntactic development of first-year university Education students over the short six-week period allowed in a "Communications" module. Subjects from established class sections were randomly selected and assigned to two pairs of control and experimental groups, and the O'Donnell-Hunt (1970) Syntactic Maturity Test and an analysis of free writing used to measure development in two factors of syntactic maturity. The amount of growth experienced by the experimental groups was compared with that of the control groups, and, where possible, with normative data reported by Hunt (1970). The work of O'Hare (1973) and of Combs (1975-76) provided a basis for both design and procedure, but no attempt was made to estimate the relationship of sentence-combining practice to over-all quality of writing, which both of these researchers reported was significant; and no attempt was made to estimate the relative permanence of control group gains, although Combs (1975-6) showed significant retention after eight weeks as measured in words per T-unit.

O'Donnell (1976) in his Critique of Some Indices of Syntactic Maturity concluded "It may turn out that in spite of lack of precision, T-unit length is still the most useful and useable index of syntactic development over a wide age-range and that mean clause length is the best single measure of syntactic complexity at the high school level

and beyond." Since this study involved first-year university students over such a short time-span, it seemed wise, then, to use here only the two indices most generally promising to date: words per T-unit and words per clause.

Hypothesis. The study was designed to test the following hypothesis for significance at the .05 level:

> The experimental groups (1976 and 1977), which were exposed to Strong's (1973) sentence-combining practice material over six-week periods, will score significantly higher on two factors of syntactic maturity than the corresponding control groups which were not exposed to the same material.

Design. With the exception of the method for the selection of subjects, the pre-test-post-test control group design described by Campbell and Stanley (1968, p. 13 ff.) was utilized. It took the following form:

R O_1 X O_2

R O_3 O_4

Procedure, 1976. During a six-week period in the spring of 1976, the writer taught one module of a four-module "Communications" course to two class sections at The University of New Brunswick (Fredericton, N.B., Canada) using Strong's (1973) Sentence Combining: A Composing Book while his colleague S. E. Bateman taught another module of the same course to two other sections using Flanigan's (1974) Patterns of Exposition: What, How & Why. Average enrollment per section was 25. Each student was involved in 18 hours of in-class activity (three hours

per week) and approximately 25 hours of out-of-class writing. At the beginning and the end of the six weeks, in two specially designated periods, all four class sections did the O'Donnell-Hunt (1970) Syntactic Maturity Test. There was no discussion of the project during the regular class and special testing periods, and the pre- and post-tests were included as part of the regular work of the modules. Finally, after the post-test periods, balanced groups were set up by selecting at random 32 students from the exposition class sections to form the control group and another 32 from the sentence-combining sections to form the experimental group. Then, for the 64 students thus selected, the pre and post "aluminum" paragraphs resulting from the O'Donnell-Hunt (1970) test were analyzed for words per T-unit (W/T) and words per clause (W/C) following procedures described by Hunt (1970, p. 4.) and O'Hare (1973, pp. 47-49).

The work done by both groups followed very closely the textual materials and guides provided by the two authors. In both cases, during the six-week period, there was coverage of the topics in the texts, and all students completed a sampling throughout the texts of at least half of the exercises provided and activities suggested. In both cases, the objectives of the two modules were discussed, initially, with the students, with the general pedagogical rationale of the two authors adhered to as far as seemed reasonable.

In the experimental group, the writer made use of the detailed guides in Strong's (1973) Sentence Combining: A Composing Book and the accompanying Instructor's Manual which included notes on the pro's and

con's of sentence-combining and a number of practical teaching suggestions emphasizing individual, small-group, and whole-class exploration and evaluation of sentence-combining options arising out of the students' own syntactic competencies. Content for each composition in Phase I was provided in the form of a sequence of kernel sentences grouped to facilitate choice of interesting syntactic alternatives. Topics and sequences progressed from simple to complex. Phase II was based on the work of Francis Christensen (1967), and each lesson presented a model sentence the structure of which was followed as students worked with the blocks of kernels provided. Techniques acquired in both phases were periodically tested for usefulness in short compositions on individually-chosen topics. As far as theory and terminology are concerned, the lessons were practically "grammar-free."

Meanwhile, the control students concentrated on expository writing — selecting topics; gathering data; writing thesis statements; outlining, drafting, discussing, and revising short reports. Flanigan's text (1974) was followed as closely as possible. There was some guidance in sentence revision, but in the traditional manner only. Grammatical terminology was avoided consistently.

Finally, it should be noted that the students in both groups were locked into the usual university time and course schedules and that there was no practical way to control their in-and-out-of-college language experiences, although all were enrolled in the first year of a four-year Education programme with required core courses designated "Introduction to Teaching" and "Communications I." It was also noted that, at the

end of the academic year, the difference between the mean grade-point averages of the two groups on "Communications I" was only .05.

Summarizing, independent variables included methods and materials: sentence-combining practice and related writing versus instruction and practice in the preparation and presentation of expository reports; dependent variables were two factors of syntactic maturity: words per T-unit and words per clause. Obvious limitations related to the selection of the groups involved and the language experiences of the subjects outside the sentence-combining and report-writing modules.

Procedure, 1977. The results of the 1976 project gave rise to the decision to repeat the work in 1977 under conditions as nearly as possible identical with those of a year earlier except

(1) both control and experimental groups were taught by the writer and were balanced at 25 each; and

(2) in addition to the O'Donnell-Hunt (1970) Syntactic Maturity Test's "aluminum" paragraphs, 300-word samples of free writing (See Appendix.) were elicited at pre- and post-test time and also analyzed for words per T-unit and words per clause.

Results

Results, 1976. These are summarized in Tables 1, 2, and 3 and confirm the hypothesis that the experimental group, which worked with Strong's (1973) sentence-combining material, will score significantly higher on two factors of syntactic maturity than the control group which did not work with this material.

Pre-treatment and post-treatment W/T and W/C mean scores of control and experimental groups were compared by *t*-tests for two independent

means assuming unequal variances. Table 1 shows that, at pre-treatment time there were no significant differences between the two groups and supports the assumption that the groups were equivalent as the result of randomization. On the other hand, the comparable values at post-treatment show that the experimental group attained a highly significant gain, at the .001 level of confidence, over the control group on both measures.

Pre- and post-treatment mean change scores (post-treatment means minus pre-treatment means) were then analyzed by *t*-tests for correlated measures. Table 2 reveals no significant change for the control group over the six-week period involved while, for the experimental group, change was significant again at the .001 level on both facotrs. The experimental group's mean pre-post change score of 5.01 words per T-unit over a six week period at first year university compares most favourably with the gain of 6.12 words per T-unit reported by O'Hare (1973, p. 54) for his seventh graders over a much longer period of time. Also, the present study's experimental group wrote 17.83 words per T-unit and 10.75 words per clause at the end of the six-week period -- considerably more than the 14.78 and 9.95 reported by Hunt (1970, p. 20) for the skilled adults he tested with the same instrument used here.

Table 3 presents the results of a simple analysis of covariance used to ensure statistical control to the end that the results described above may be attributed, within limits of error, to the treatment variable and to no other causal circumstance. Here the significance of the *F* ratio again confirms the hypothesis.

Table 1

Comparison of Pre- and Post-treatment Mean Scores on Two Factors of Syntactic Maturity: Control and Experimental Groups, Syntactic Maturity Test, 1976.

Factor	Mean	SD	Difference	t-value	df
Pre-treatment					
W/T					
Control	12.48	2.89			
Experimental	12.82	3.70	.34	.41 (NS)	62
W/C					
Control	8.33	1.70			
Experimental	8.16	1.12	- .17	.48 (NS)	62
Post-treatment					
W/T					
Control	12.02	2.18			
Experimental	17.83	4.03	5.81	7.18***	62
W/C					
Control	7.94	1.47			
Experimental	10.75	2.52	2.81	5.44***	62

*** - Significant at or beyond the .001 level.

Table 2

Comparison of Pre- and Post-treatment Mean Change Scores on Two Factors of Syntactic Maturity: Control and Experimental Groups, Syntactic Maturity Test, 1976

Factor	Pre-test	Post-test	Change	SD	t-value	df
Control						
W/T	12.48	12.02	- 0.46	2.25	1.14 (NS)	31
W/C	8.33	7.94	- 0.39	1.38	1.62 (NS)	31
Experimental						
W/T	12.82	17.83 (14.78)[a]	5.01	4.36	6.51***	31
W/C	8.16	10.75 (9.95)[a]	2.59	2.55	5.73***	31

a - Skilled adults, Hunt, 1970.

*** - Significant at or beyond the .001 level

Table 3

Analysis of Covariance of Post-test with Pre-test Scores: Syntactic Maturity Test, 1976

Source of Variance	Mean Square	Degrees of Freedom	F Ratio
W/T			
Between Groups	511.11	1	59.61***
Within Groups	332.85	61	
W/C			
Between Groups	133.67	1	35.42***
Within Groups	79.86	61	

*** - Significant at or beyond the .001 level.

Results, 1977. Because the 1976 results were so uniformly positive and because they were based on the use of a single evaluative instrument it seemed worthwhile to repeat the experiment in 1977, this time having the experimenter teach both experimental and control groups, and adding free writing to test the consistency of the original findings.

The 1977 results are summarized in Tables 4, 5, and 6, and give qualified support to the hypothesis.

This time, with new experimental and control groups, the *t*-tests compared the pre- and post-treatment means for free writing as well as for the Syntactic Maturity Test, and the results were not as clear-cut as previously. The pre-treatment means (Table 4) show significant W/T and W/C differences (at the .05 and .01 levels) on the Syntactic Maturity Test but not on the free writing. Randomization had apparently established equivalency on the free writing only. Also, although the post-treatment means show significant W/T and W/C differences (at the .001 level) on the Syntactic Maturity Test, the comparable differences on the free writing are not significant for W/T and at the .05 level only for W/C. The table 4 data, then, gives little support to the hypothesis.

The pre- and post-treatment mean change scores in Table 5 show no significant change for the control group except on the free writing W/C measure where the significance is at the .05 level, while, for the experimental group, the change scores all give *t*-values significant at the .001 level. These positive indications are in contrast with some of those in Table 4. Also, this 1977 experimental group's change

means (W/T and W/C) on both the Syntactic Matuirty Test and the free writing compare most favorably with those for the 1976 group, and all experimental post-test scores are again higher than those reported by Hunt (1970, p. 20) for his skilled adults.

The analysis of covariance in Table 6 confirms the first hypothesis as far as the Syntactic Matuirty Test results are concerned, but it leaves the free writing results in some doubt, with this measure's W/T *F* ratio significant at the .05 level only and its W/C *F* ratio below that level.

Table 4

Comparison of Pre- and Post-treatment Mean Scores on Two Factors of Syntactic Maturity: Control and Experimental Groups, Syntactic Maturity Test and Free Writing[a], 1977

Factor	Mean	SD	Difference	t-value	df
Pre-treatment					
W/T					
Control	11.64	2.40			
	(14.76)	(3.25)			
Experimental	13.37	3.69	1.73	1.97*	48
	(14.60)	(3.13)	(.16)	(.18) (NS)	(48)
W/C					
Control	7.65	1.00			
	(8.19)	(1.52)			
Experimental	8.56	1.54	.91	2.48**	48
	(8.76)	(1.74)	(.57)	(1.21) (NS)	(48)
Post-treatment					
W/T					
Control	11.95	2.63			
	(16.25)	(3.42)			
Experimental	16.45	3.80	4.50	4.85***	48
	(18.14)	(4.50)	(1.89)	(1.67) (NS)[b]	(48)
W/C					
Control	7.80	1.02			
	(9.69)	(2.37)			
Experimental	11.36	2.83	3.56	5.90***	48
	(11.29)	(3.37)	(1.60)	(1.93)*	(48)

a - Numbers in parentheses show free writing data.
b - Significant to the .10 level only.
* - Significant at or beyond the .05 level.
** - Significant at or beyond the .01 level.
*** - Significant at or beyond the .001 level.

Table 5

Comparison of Pre- and Post-treatment Mean Change Scores on Two Factors of Syntactic Maturity: Control and Experimental Groups, Syntactic Maturity Test and Free Writing[a], 1977.

Factor	Pre-test	Post-test		Change	t-value	df
Control						
W/T	11.64	11.95		.31	.56 (NS)	24
	(14.76)	(16.25)		(1.48)	T.96 (NS)	24
W/C	7.65	7.80		.15	.73 (NS)	24
	(8.19)	(9.69)		(1.49)	(3.12)*	24
Experimental						
W/T	13.37	16.45		3.07	4.16***	24
	(14.60)	(18.14)	14.78[b]	(3.54)	(4.44)***	(24)
W/C	8.56	11.36		2.80	4.41***	24
	(8.76)	(11.29)	9.95[b]	(2.53)	(3.49)***	(24)

a - Numbers in parentheses show free writing data.

b - Skilled adults, Hunt, 1970.

* - Significant at or beyond the .005 level.

*** - Significant at or beyond the .001 level.

Table 6

Analysis of Covariance of Post-test with Pre-test Scores: Syntactic Maturity Test and Free Writing, 1977

Source of Variance	Mean Square	Degrees of Freedom	F Ratio
Syntactic Maturity Test			
W/T			
Between Groups	152.32	1	17.97***
Within Groups	8.47	47	
W/C			
Between Groups	127.43	1	27.83***
Within Groups	4.57	47	
Free Writing			
W/T			
Between Groups	49.40	1	3.74*
Within Groups	13.19	47	
W/C			
Between Groups	19.38	1	2.50 (NS)
Within Groups	7.75	47	

* - Significant at the .05 level.

*** - Significant at or beyond the .001 level.

Summary. With respect to the Syntactic Maturity Test, the 1976 groups were equivalent as a result of randomization, and the experimental group experienced growth and established superiority significant in both cases at the .001 level. An analysis of covariance further confirmed the hypothesis.

As far as the Syntactic Maturity Test was concerned, the 1977 groups were not equivalent as a result of randomization, but they were with respect to the free writing samples. On both the Syntactic Maturity Test and the free writing the experimental group experienced growth significant at the .001 level. However, it was only on the Syntactic Maturity Test that superiority was established at the same level. Again, as far as the Syntactic Maturity Test was concerned, an analysis of covariance supported the major hypothesis. On the free writing, however, the support was for the W/T measure only, with an F ratio significant at the .05 level.

Both in 1976 and again in 1977 the experimental group registered improvement on both the W/T and W/C measures well beyond the levels of the skilled adults in Hunt's 1970 study. The 1977 free writing mean of 18.14 words-per-T-unit for these college freshmen compares most favourably with the 14.78 level attained by Hunt's (1970) mature group.

The covariance tables emphasize the consistency of the positive results of the 1976 and 1977 treatments as measured by the Syntactic Maturity Test, with all F ratios significant at the .001 level. They also indicate the somewhat weaker case for the effect on the improvement in

free writing. However, the degree of consistency from year to year is not inconsiderable when one keeps in mind the usual variability of freshman groups, the short time-span allowed, and other obvious limitations.

Conclusion and Comment

The results allow the general conclusion that the writing of the experimental groups, 1976 and 1977, was syntactically more mature than that of the control groups and syntactically more mature than that at pre-test time. When compared with Hunt's (1970) norms, the level of syntactic maturity of the experimental writing exceeded that attained by mature adults as measured by W/T and W/C. Also, freshman W/T gains for the six-week period were, in each case, at least half as great as gains reported by O'Hare (1973, p. 58) for his grade seven students over an extended eight-month period and greater than those reported by Combs (1976, p. 142) for students at the same level over a four-month period. The fact that the lowest W/C gain here was 2.53 as compared with 1.49 (O'Hare) and .70 (Combs) supports the belief that clause length can be a significant measure of syntactic maturity at the upper levels. In all of this, however, it must be remembered that the 1977 groups exhibited some gain which can not be attributed to the treatment (See Table 4). Nevertheless, the over-all picture is a positive one.

The 1976 results, which were based on the Syntactic Maturity Test alone, uniformly support the hypothesis. For 1977, however, the two groups presented obvious problems: at pre-treatment time, randomization

succeeded in equating them on the free writing but not on the Syntactic Maturity Test, and yet the analysis of covariance showed more significant differences in the Syntactic Maturity results than in those for the free writing. The consistency of Syntactic Matuirty Test gains in both years is interesting, and it seems reasonable in view of the fact that the competencies required in coping with Strong's sentence-combining materials and the test itself are very similar. What contrasts there were between the two sets of data may be due, in part at least, to teacher-treatment influence: in 1976 the experimental group was taught by the researcher while the control group was taught by a colleague; in 1977, both groups were taught by the researcher. It appears, then, that variation in the 1977 procedure succeeded in producing variation in the 1977 results.

No attempt was made here to relate the syntactic maturity ratios to teachers' judgements as to "quality" of writing; but the positive findings of O'Hare (1973) and of Combs (1976) on this relationship indicate that these indices may serve as guides in this most important area at the junior high school level. Consequently, it seems reasonable to assume that the W/T and W/C increments presented in this study may indicate growth in "quality" at the freshman level as well.

Combs (1976) was first to demonstrate through delayed post-testing that W/T and W/C increments continue, at reduced levels, to distinguish significantly between control and experimental groups in studies such as this. In the present work, although nothing of the sort was attempted, the increments actually attained during a six-week period seem all the

more surprising because the students involved were initially already writing at about the level of Hunt's "average" adults (1970, p. 20); and, it is quite likely that these effects would not erode completely and that they might even be maintained or augmented if appropriate practice were continued.

Implications

The basic purpose of this work was to test the value of Strong's sentence-combining materials in increasing the syntactic maturity of first-year university students over six-week periods in two successive years; and, in general, its affirmative conclusions correspond with those of Mellon (1969), O'Hare (1973), and Combs (1976). But whereas Mellon coupled sentence-combining practice with direct transformational-generative grammar instruction, O'Hare and Combs omitted the study of grammar as such and relied solely on patterned practice. In contrast with these, Strong's Sentence Combining: A Composing Book (1973) gave the experimental classes in this study a great deal of opportunity for freer and more extensive experimentation: the shaping of short compositions from groups of kernel sentences provided, concentrated practice in the use of the "free modifiers" and the "cumulative sentences" so persuasively advocated by Francis Christensen (1967, 1976), and a good deal of exploration and evaluation of rhetorical options. Thus this study represented a departure from previous investigations not only in the short time-span allowed and the nature of the population included but, more importantly perhaps, in the type of sentence-combining practice and free

writing they did. And, in spite of the numerous variables that bear on the results of this and other sentence-combining studies (See Combs, 1976, p. 147) and the unevenness ofthe 1977 results, the net effect here gives added support to the general value of sentence-combining, extends its range into first-year university, and emphasizes the usefulness of diversified practice closely related to the composing process.

This study indicated that Strong's materials were appropriate for the freshman level, for they did help to make these particular classes places for mutual inquiry and active experimentation involving the varied syntactic options open to them when challenged with a series of kernel sentences on a topic of concern. In this case, transfer of attitudes and skills to other writing seemed quite natural, even inevitable.

In Chapter III of Wardhaugh and Brown's (1976) A Survey of Applied Linguistics Jean Malmstrom (pp. 50-53) traces the impact of linguistic grammar on the production of curricular materials with particular reference to sentence-combining, 1965-75; and she cites this as a promising example of a case in which "the rule of lag between research and technology did not hold" (p. 52). Unfortunately, however, the gap between the new materials and actual classroom practices remained; for, as Hook (1976) comments, "This fine material is about ready for the children but are the teachers ready for the fine material?" (p. 211). Hook was discussing a new elementary school language and composition series that contained sentence-combining materials, but his remark applies equally to teachers of older students.

In the context of the present furor over the maturity and quality of college writing, the freshman composition teacher should now be encouraged to study the claims and limitations of sentence-combining research and the contribution that it might make to his efforts. An examination of the exercises of O'Hare (1973, 1975), Cooper (1973), Strong (1973), and Perron (1974) will provide him background for constructing and trying-out materials adapted to the particular needs of the students he is teaching. Most promising seems to be the movement away from formally patterned practice and towards the integration of sentence-combining activities with the whole composing process. Above all, the teacher can help his students discover for themselves the basic language competencies they already possess, and, by every means possible - including sentence-combining - help them gain confident control over the syntactic resources of their language.

O'Hare (1973, pp. 76, 77) made twelve suggestions for further research, and this writer supports these in toto. In particular, he feels that the effects both positive and negative, of different kinds of sentence-combining practice on various types of high school and junior college writing should be investigated and that careful and balanced assessments should be made of this type of activity in different situations and with different student populations.

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Appendix

Free Writing

Read over the following topics or leads and choose one for about thirty minutes or 300 words of writing. Try to limit yourself to a specific area of interest or concern. Write for fellow students. Take a few minutes to organize your thoughts, and make a rough draft if you wish. Then write! Simply do the best you can.

1. I saw it happen
2. What I learned from experience
3. Why I like (favorite T.V. show, movie, book, sport, hobby)
4. What I'll be doing ten years from now
5. If I could do it over again
6. On being alone
7. My day in .....
8. Flight to .....
9. If ..... came to town
10. My idea of happiness
11. What scares me
12. My own standard of living
13. Their (?) standard of living
14. Were people happier in days gone by?
15. Some things do not change
16. The trouble with families
17. Mistakes parents make with children

18. Why teenagers rebel
19. Are teenagers conservative?
20. Are teenagers adults?
21. There's nobody like .....
22. There's nothing like .....
23. Who should go to university?
24. My idea of an educated person
25. My idea of a good teacher
26. What I like about life in .....
27. What I dislike about life in .....
28. ..... contribution(s) to mankind
29. In what ways are all men equal?
30. The future of planet Earth
31. Are Canadians really different from Americans?
32. The spirit of our time
33. An environmental problem
34. The energy problem
35. The food problem
36. The nuclear threat (or promise)
37. The food problem
38. Inflation in the 70's